

ALLEGED OUTRAGES COMMITTED BY UNITED STATES  
SOLDIERS AT FORT RIDGELY.

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MARCH 23, 1860.—Ordered to be printed.

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Mr. STANTON, from the Committee on Military Affairs, made the following

REPORT.

*The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the petition of sundry citizens of Minnesota, praying an inquiry into the acts of a portion of the United States troops stationed at Fort Ridgely, and compensation for injuries committed by them, now report:*

That they have had the same under consideration, and find that, from the facts set forth in the petition and the affidavit accompanying it, the transaction seems to have been one of the most gross and wanton outrages that can be conceived or imagined.

As the facts set forth show not the slightest color of provocation, and the evidence is wholly *ex parte*, your committee doubt but there must be some explanation of the reasons and motives for so gross an outrage that is not disclosed in the papers before them.

But no excuse or provocation can be a justification for arson and mayhem upon helpless and unprotected citizens, and the authors of it deserve the most severe and exemplary punishment, if the facts set forth in the petition and affidavit are true. They certainly call for an investigation by the War Department, and if sustained, the parties should be visited with the penalties prescribed by martial law.

But your committee do not see what relief Congress can properly be called upon to afford to the injured party, nor can they suppose there can be any necessity for any such interference.

The perpetrators are subject to the civil and criminal laws of the country, and may be indicted and convicted before the proper court for the offence. The fact that they were soldiers does not exempt them from prosecution and punishment, and the parties are also liable to civil action for any injury done to the persons or property of the injured parties.

The petition asks "a thorough investigation of the outrages," &c., by Congress. But with all due deference to the petitioners, the committee submit to the House that the grand jury of Brown county, Minnesota, is the proper tribunal to institute and carry on this inves-

tigation. The witnesses whose testimony will be required are presumed to be in the neighborhood where the transaction occurred, and within reach of the process of the court.

It is also true that the War Department, the military arm of the government, is bound not only for the protection of the party injured, but for the preservation of discipline in the army, to inquire into this transaction, and the committee cannot presume that this duty will not be faithfully and impartially discharged.

The committee, therefore, ask to be discharged from the further consideration of the subject, and that the petitioners have leave to withdraw their petition.

## REPORT